

**Amendments to the Claims:****Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously presented) A method for the purification of an easily polymerizable substance, comprising the step of using a distillation column provided in at least part thereof with (a) a tray directly fixed with a bolt and a nut to a support ring fitted to the inner wall of the column or (b) a tray fixed to a support ring fitted to the inner wall with a vertical clamp and provided in the lower part thereof with a splash collision;

wherein at least one liquid passing opening is provided to a joint part between said support ring and the inner wall of said column and said tray is a dualflow tray and said splash collision plate having an opening area ratio of said tray in the range of 30% to 70% or a splash collision plate being a disc-and-doughnut type collision plate and/or a segment baffle type collision plate having a total opening area of said collision plate and a segmental opening in the range of 10% to 90% relative to a cross section of the column.

2. (Canceled).

3. (Canceled).

4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1 further comprising a liquid passing opening provided to a fixing part between said tray and said support ring and/or, where one tray is formed of a plurality of component plates, a fixing part between each of the component plates and the plate of tray.

5. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 1, wherein said distillation column comprises a plurality of trays.

6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 5, wherein said distillation column has 3 to 100 of said trays.

7. (Original) A method according to claim 1, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid, an ester thereof, a vinyl-group containing compound, and a diolefin compound.

8. (Original) A method according to claim 7, wherein said easily polymerizable substance is at least one member selected from the group consisting of an unsaturated carboxylic acid and an ester thereof.

9. (Canceled).

10. (Canceled).

11. (Canceled).

12. (Canceled).

13. (Canceled).

14. (Canceled).

15. (Currently amended) A purification apparatus comprising a splash collision plate in the lower part of the distillation column, said splash collision plate being a dualflow tray having an opening area ratio of said tray in the range of 30% to 70% or a splash collision plate being a disc-and-doughnut type collision plate and/or a segment baffle type collision plate having a total opening area of said collision plate and a segmental opening in the range of 10% to 90% relative to a cross section of the column; and at least one of the following items (i) - (iii);

(i) a tray fixed to a support ring, fitted to the inner wall of a distillation column, by the use of a vertical clamp, and ~~a splash collision plate in the lower part of the distillation column, said splash collision plate being a dualflow tray having an opening area ratio of said tray in the range of 30% to 70% or a splash collision plate being a disc-and-doughnut type collision plate and/or a segment baffle type collision plate having a total opening area of said collision plate and a segmental opening in the range of 10% to 90% relative to a cross section of the column~~

(ii) at least one liquid passing opening provided in a joint part between said support ring and the wall of said column, and

(iii) a liquid passing opening provided in a fixing part between said tray and said support ring.

16. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15 further comprising 3 to 100 trays therein.

17. (Previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, the distillation column is used for purifying an easily polymerizable substance.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Original) An apparatus according to claim 15 further comprising a liquid passing opening provided to the fixing part between said tray and said support ring and/or, where one tray is formed of a plurality of component plates, the fixing part between each of the component plates and the plate of tray.